

**WANDERERS
DROP TWO
MORE POINTS**

WYCOMBE Wanderers were held to their fifth Rothmans Isthmian League draw of the season on Wednesday night in a drab and disappointing Division One match at Oxford City.

Wanderers have never reserved their best performances for the White House ground and this game was certainly no exception. In fact, about three-quarters of it was easily forgettable. Perhaps the main reason for that was the pitch. No-one could be 100 per cent sure of what the ball would do on this bumpy surface and the early evening dew didn't help much either.

Another factor in this poor Wycombe performance was Oxford's constant chasing and harassing. They didn't stop for

By STUART EARP: Oxford City 1, Wycombe Wanderers 1

90 minutes and the Blues just couldn't settle. No doubt City were pleased with their tactics but as a spectacle, it meant a pretty painful 90 minutes.

In the end, Oxford's supporters were grumbling about robbery when centre forward Bob Green had a 'goal' disallowed in injury time but they would do well to remember Terry Reardon's superb 25 yard volley that cannoned against the crossbar in the second half.

Overall, I think Wycombe had the better number of chances and marginally more of the play territorially — but they couldn't turn it into goals.

It would be difficult to select any player for special mention from this Wycombe display. Two of their most improved players, in fact, were disap-

pointing — Dylan Evans and Dave Alexander. But the whole side looked generally under the weather.

The Blues made two changes on Wednesday. John Delaney returned for Dave Bullock at centre back, Dave dropping to the subs bench and Tony Price came in for the injured Geoff Anthony.

Had two early chances been accepted by Wycombe, it might have been different, but both went astray from the boot of Evans. The first was a lob that sailed too high and the second a wide shot from close range.

In the main, Wycombe struggled to string any moves together on the difficult surface and goalmouth incidents were rare. Errors were commonplace in both camps and one by Peter

Harris, the City's 'keeper, almost gave Wycombe the lead after 18 minutes. He dropped Tony Horseman's corner and watched gratefully as a defender cleared off the line. John Maskell, too, had trouble holding the ball and gave away a couple of corners during the match.

The man most likely to break the deadlock was Mick Holifield, playing against his former club. He once got through the defence but lobbed wide and the half ended with Maskell saving an awkward effort from Green which swerved nastily in front of him.

Wanderers' best spell came after half time. They won two quick corners and forced a mad scramble inside the Oxford box before taking the lead in the

58th minute. Alan Evans was robbed by Price, 30 yards from goal. Price slipped the ball through to Horseman who ran on and curled a left foot shot towards the net. Harris did well to turn it onto the crossbar but then watched helplessly as Price headed the rebound into an empty net.

So Wycombe had laid the foundations for victory. They should have taken over from here but within two minutes they allowed Oxford to level the scores with their ninth goal of the season from 14 games. The defence failed to cut out a cross from the left and the dangerous Green took the ball down and rammed a fine drive wide of Maskell's hand into the far corner.

The equaliser brought new life from the home side who pressed strongly for some 10 minutes. Wycombe held out but they were never able to regain the mastery they held in the early stages of the second half. Too often the ball was belted aimlessly upfield and came right back again from Oxford in similar style. No-one was allowed time to stop the ball and use it to more positive effect.

The Blues burst into life in the 82nd minute when Horseman sent Price racing through a square defence. But Harris spotted the danger immediately and was out like a bullet to save at the striker's feet. Then the woodwork robbed Wycombe — and Reardon — of one of the best goals of the season.

Price's inswinging corner was punched out of the area by Harris. Reardon met the ball and crashed a superb volley towards the net. It dipped, twanged against the bar and then hit the airborne goalkeeper before coming down just outside the goal-line. Small wonder Terry held his head in disbelief.

But if Wycombe felt hard done by at this stage, they must count themselves a little fortunate in injury time. In the first minute Gilligan broke free and sent a low cross into the visitors' box. Only Paul Birdseye's deflection saved the day and then in the second minute of additional time, Oxford had their goal disallowed. Green and Delaney tussled for possession to a through ball but Green won the battle and drove firmly past Maskell. Referee Downey, however, spotted an infringement and awarded a free kick — much to the relief of Wycombe's players and supporters alike!

OXFORD: P. Harris; B. Barr, A. Evans, J. Woodley, A. Glass; G. Brown (sub. D. Green 73 mins.), E. Metcalfe, K. Holmes; P. Dallaway, R. Green, M. Gilligan.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, J. Delaney, R. Eaton; D. Alexander, T. Reardon, M. Holifield; A. Horseman, D. Evans, A. Price. Sub. D. Bullock (not used).

Referee: G. Downey.

Half-time: 0-0. **Goalscorers, Oxford** — R. Green (80), **Wycombe** Price (58).